

Commonwealth of Virginia that our small tobacco farms can survive and prosper in a post buy-our world.

In closing, let me state that I am eager to start the debate on tobacco. I hope my colleagues will join in so that a constructive, beneficial solution can be crafted.

**CONGRATULATING SAINT PATRICK
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA**

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to congratulate Saint Patrick Roman Catholic Church in East Chicago, Indiana, as it celebrates its 100th anniversary as a congregation, on March 17, 2002, the Feast Day of St. Patrick. The anniversary celebration will begin with an afternoon Mass celebrated by Bishop Dale J. Melczek. Following the Mass, the parishioners will enjoy an evening filled with entertainment and dancing as they observe this milestone in the church's history.

Nestled among the smokestacks of the steel mills in the Indiana Harbor, St. Patrick Church has risen from its humble beginnings to serve as a cornerstone of the East Chicago community. Founded in 1902, the parish of St. Patrick was the first Roman Catholic Church established in the Indiana Harbor. Under the guidance of Father Thomas Mungoven, eight families met for Sunday Mass in Klein Hall on Michigan Avenue. With the strength of their faith to bolster their spirits, this small congregation constructed a church of their own. On January 25, 1903, the parish of St. Patrick celebrated its first Mass in its new home. By 1909, the parish grew to include 87 families from mostly Irish and Slavic backgrounds.

Over the years, as other ethnic groups were drawn to the area by the opportunities offered in the steel mills, the composition of East Chicago grew more diverse. Irish and Slavic families now welcomed Hispanic and African-American Catholics into the congregation. In 1986, in an effort to involve new parishioners in Sunday services, Father John Ambre instituted Masses in Spanish.

As the parish mission statement attests, the members "strive to be a welcoming community celebrating our cultural diversity; foster harmony and reconciliation among parishioners and the community . . ." Embracing the Christian ideals of loving thy brothers and sisters and honoring thy neighbors, the parishioners have opened the doors of St. Patrick to those in need of a spiritual home. When other ethnic parishes in East Chicago closed, St. Patrick welcomed these Catholics with open arms. In 1987, when St. Francis of Assisi Parish closed, St. Patrick installed the cornerstone of this church in its vestibule walls, a symbolic gesture affirming the acceptance of these new members into the church community. Again, when Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish closed in 1998, rather than allowing the church to fade from the memories of its former parishioners, St. Patrick added the altar to its own sanctuary. St. Patrick represents more than a building where worshippers meet once a week for a service; it truly embodies the tenets of the faith it espouses.

Since 1997, the current pastor, Father Fernando de Cristobal, has used his position as a spiritual leader to promote various cultural activities in order to better educate the entire congregation. For the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a holy day revered in Mexico, the celebration includes Las Mananitas, or morning songs, offered to the Virgin Mary and mariachi music, followed by a midnight Mass. On June 24th, the parish honors Saint John the Baptist, the patron saint of Puerto Rico, with a bilingual mass and a banquet. Keeping with this spirit of diversity, the centennial celebration will feature Irish dancers and bagpipes in an effort to pay tribute to the parish's Irish heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me today in commending the parish family of St. Patrick Church, under the guidance of Father Fernando de Cristobal, as they prepare to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of their founding. All past and present parishioners and pastors should be proud of the numerous contributions they have made out of the love and the devotion they have displayed for their church.

GUN VIOLENCE IN LYNBROOK

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my deepest sympathy to the families of Reverend Lawrence Penzes and Eileen Tosner, both of whom were fatally shot Tuesday morning during 9 a.m. mass at Our Lady of Peace Church in Lynbrook, New York.

Reverend Penzes, 50, was ordained in 1978, and he became pastor at Our Lady of Peace in 1994. It is safe to say he was the backbone of the church. Parishioners remember him as a wonderful, generous and outgoing lay leader who touched countless lives. Other members of the Rockville Centre diocese commend his commitment to the Catholic faith and community.

Penzes has been instrumental in helping his church community of 2,400 families through the 6 months following September 11. He organized several sessions on dealing with stress, and continued his regular trips to U.S. armed forces stationed around the world. Other notable ways he served our country was his time as a chaplain in the local police force, and the air force.

Eileen Tosner, 73, was a devout Irish Catholic whose life revolved around her family, friends and community. She was a quiet but active woman who was always willing to help with whatever task was at hand. She worked at the church and volunteered on Sundays at the local VFW Post 2307 during bingo games. Up until two years ago, she helped other senior citizens by working as a companion and a helper. Often she could be found at the Lynbrook senior citizens center with her friends.

She was married to her husband Frank for more than 50 years, and together they had five children. Tosner's life wasn't easy; she had two paralyzed siblings, and two of her sons died of cancer. But all throughout her life, despite her difficulties, she remained deeply religious.

My heart is with the parishioners, the clergy and staff of Our Lady of Peace who witnessed this brutal violence. We must all say a prayer and light a candle for the community near Our Lady of Peace that was affected by this tragedy. The neighbors, police, emergency personnel and the nearby schools were all senselessly victimized as well.

I was in the vicinity of the church when the shooting occurred. Many of the local roads were blocked; those living nearby were basically under house arrest. Police covered the streets as they looked for the shooter, who had taken cover in a nearby home. Four hundred schoolchildren were being held indoors at the church school.

This isn't a new occurrence. Random acts of gun violence against innocent people happen all the time. A lot of Americans don't think it can happen to them, but my neighbors and I know all too well the pain that gun violence brings. It has happened everywhere: on trains, in schools, homes, the workplace. And now, in a place of worship.

It is unbelievable, yet it's true.

I have processed the details of what happened yesterday. I'm not standing here on a soapbox. I'm not talking about a certain piece of legislation.

I'm talking about safety. I'm talking about our children's safety, our neighbors' safety, the safety of different religious worshippers.

I think it's obvious. Gun violence wreaks havoc in our lives in various ways, not the least of which is the loss of safe places in our community. If we can't be safe at church, at school, on commuter trains, in our workplaces or at home, where does that leave us?

I urge you to seriously consider the havoc gun violence creates in our society. Better yet, consider its effect on your community. Please take a minute to think about it before it's too late.

May God be with us all.

**TRIBUTE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS ON THE
THIRTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF
THEIR BECOMING A CABINET DE-
PARTMENT**

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the thirteenth anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs becoming a Cabinet Department. As Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am privileged to work with thousands of dedicated employees of the Department to improve the delivery of benefits and services to our nation's 25 million veterans and their families.

On October 25, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Department of Veterans Affairs Act (H.R. 3471 in the 100th Congress), legislation I cosponsored and strongly supported. This Act led to the Veterans Administration (VA) becoming the 14th federal Department of the Executive Branch.

Subsequently, on March 15th, 1989, thirteen years ago this week, the Honorable Edwin Derwinski, was sworn in as the first Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Finally, the nation's veterans had a full and permanent seat at the President's Cabinet table.